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CIA 'dirty tricks' men return to favour

By RICHARD BEESTON in Washington

THE Central Intelligence Agency under the Reagan Administration is rapidly recovering from the scandals and battering it took during the days of Mr Nixon, and from the purges of the Carter administration.

The agency's new Director, Mr William Casey, a vigorous 68-year-old, is on "Ronnie" terms with his old friend the President, and this relationship helps account for the rising morale of the CIA.

When he took over with the Reagan Administration, Mr Casey promised to restore morale and improve the agency's "desperately needed" intelligence capability. He is now making good his promise, bringing in additional funds and high-grade recruits.

Mr Casey, who was President Reagan's election campaign manager and served as a secret intelligence chief in London during the war, has overall

command of the American intelligence community.

He replaces Admiral Stansfield Turner, Carter's CIA chief, whose mass firings of experienced intelligence officers brought the agency's morale to an all-time low.

Mr Casey wears three hats: as chief of all United States intelligence services, director of the CIA and a member of the cabinet. He has now all but handed over his overlordship of American intelligence to his competent, hard-working deputy, Admiral Robert Inman (who starts his day at 4 am) to concentrate on maintaining his close personal links with President Reagan, and on rebuilding the clandestine side of the CIA.

Mr Casey has appointed a personal friend, Mr Max Hugel, as his director of operations and "spymaster."

The move brought strong criticism from CIA professionals because Mr Hugel, a former businessman who also worked

on the Reagan election campaign, has no experience of cloak and dagger operations.

But Mr Casey is said to want only a trusted friend as his deputy, and Mr Hugel is reported to be learning the job fast.

One problem facing the two men is that the agency is desperately short of "lamp-lighters," the explosives and "dirty tricks" experts who do the tough work. Many were dismissed during the Carter days.

Mr Casey's other main objective has been to restore the confidence of friendly intelligence agencies abroad who have been reluctant to trust, cooperate and share secrets with the CIA since it fell into disgrace in the mid-seventies.

Since he took office he has visited Britain, France, West Germany, the Middle East and Japan, visiting CIA stations and reassuring allied secret services that his agency is back in serious business.

He has maintained the strong links he established with British intelligence during the war. During Mrs Thatcher's visit to the United States this year he graciously told a banquet in her honour that America had learned all it knew about intelligence from Britain.

He was too polite to mention the other side of the coin—how many of America's secrets had been given away by British traitors.



Admiral Stansfield Turner



Mr William Casey